

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 IO-14 OMB-01 CIAE-00

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R 201240Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4005

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12589

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: KASHMIR

REF: NEW DELHI 12198

VIENNA FOR AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN

SUMMARY: AS THE KASHMIR NEGOTIATIONS MARCH ON, THE END
CONTINUES TO SLIP FURTHER INTO THE DISTANCE. SHEIKH ABDULLAH
JUST CONCLUDED A VISIT TO NEW DELHI WHICH RESULTED IN LITTLE
IF ANY PROGRESS. HIS POSITIONS AND THOSE OF THE GOI SEEM
HARDER. WHILE STILL VOICING OPTIMISM, HE IS NO LONGER
TALKING OF AGREEMENT NEXT MONTH, AND THE GOI SAID PRIVATELY
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THAT THERE IS NO URGENCY. THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL PROBABLY

DRAG ON INTO NEXT YEAR, AND PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS
SEEM LESS IMMEDIATE. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH LOWER-LEVEL TALKS NOT MAKING MUCH PROGRESS. SHEIKH ABDULLAH CAME TO DELHI SEPTEMBER 14-19 WITH HIS CHIEF LIEUTENANT, MIRZA AFZAL BEG, FOR TALKS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SWARAN SINGH AND PRIME MINISTER GANDHI. THERE IS NO INDICATION OF ANY BREAKTHROUGH. THE SHEIKH TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 18 THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD NOT REACHED A "DECISIVE STAGE". HE SAID THAT THE PROBLEM "BRISTLES WITH DIFFICULTIES AND INVOLVES MANY LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES."

2. THE SHEIKH'S POSITION: ALTHOUGH SHEIKH ABDULLAH'S AND MRS. GANDHI'S EMISSARIES HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING WHICH OF THE LAWS EXTENDED TO KASHMIR AFTER THE SHEIKH'S REMOVAL FROM POWER IN 1953 SHOULD REMAIN, HE INSISTS THAT THE FINAL DECISION MUST BE TAKEN BY A NEW STATE LEGISLATURE CHOSEN IN FREE ELECTIONS. (APPARENTLY HE WANTS TO PUBLICIZE BEFORE THE ELECTION GOI CONCESSIONS, BUT NOT HIS OWN, WHICH WOULD BE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE NEW LEGISLATURE.) ALTHOUGH HE EARLIER INDICATED THAT HE MIGHT HEAD A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT AFTER THE PRESENT LEGISLATURE WAS DISSOLVED AND BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, HE TOLD HIS PRESS CONFERENCE HE DOES NOT WANT TO BECOME CHIEF MINISTER OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT BOTH HIS POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, THE PLEBISCITE FRONT, AND THE CONGRESS PARTY IN THE STATE SHOULD DISSOLVE. HE WOULD THEN HEAD A NEW ORGANIZATION OF ALL "SECULAR FORCES", WHICH WOULD CONTEST THE ELECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THE SHEIKH IS TELLING FRIENDS (AND, HE SAYS, THE GOI) THAT IF THERE IS NO AGREEMENT HE WILL SIMPLY GO BACK INTO RETIREMENT AND THE PRESENT SITUATION WILL CONTINUE. THE GOI MUST DECIDE IF A STABILIZATION BASED UPON AN UNDERSTANDING WITH HIM WHILE HE IS ALIVE IS IMPORTANT. HE THINKS THE GOI WANTS A SETTLEMENT, AND HE CAN WAIT OUT MRS. GANDHI.

3. THE GOI POSITION: THE GOI IS UNABLE TO AGREE TO THIS SCENARIO. IF THE TWO EMISSARIES CAN AGREE ON WHICH LAWS EXTENDED TO KASHMIR AFTER 1953 SHOULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE, THE GOI WILL INSIST THAT THIS AGREEMENT BE PUBLICIZED, SINCE IT WILL DEMONSTRATE WHAT THE GOI HAD GAINED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS
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AND WILL PROVE THAT THE CLOCK IS NOT REALLY BEING TURNED BACK TO 1953. THE GOI REJECTS THE IDEA OF SPECIAL ELECTIONS AND OF DISSOLVING THE CONGRESS PARTY IN JAMMU-KASHMIR. IT WANTS SHEIKH ABDULLAH TO HEAD THE CONGRESS PARTY IN THE STATE. THE SHEIKH DOES NOT WANT TO JOIN CONGRESS. (CONGRESS PARTY LEADERS FROM TMR JAMMU PORTION OF THE STATE ARGUE THAT THE JANA SANGH WOULD WIN HEAVILY IN JAMMU SHOULD CONGRESS DISSOLVE OR FORM A COALITION WITH THE SHEIKH. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF CONGRESS

CONTECTS AGAINST THE SHEIKH, IT WOULD WIN EITHER A BARE MAJORITY OR AT LEAST A COMMANDING MINORITY BECAUSE OF ITS STRENGTH IN JAMMU AND LADAKH, THEY ARGUE.) SOME OFFICIALS AND CLOSE OBSERVERS OF KASHMIR TELL US MRS. GANDHI WANTS A KASHMIR SETTLEMENT PRIMARILY AS A BASE FOR STRENGTHENING HER HAND IN SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH PAKISTAN UNDER THE SIMLA AGREEMENT. SUCH A SETTLEMENT, HOWEVER, WOULD BE USEFUL, NOT INDISPENSABLE, AND MRS. GANDHI REALIZES THAT IN THE SHORT RUN IT WOULD CAUSE SOME TENSION WITH PAKISTAN. SHE IS WILLING TO LET THE MATTER DRIFT IF SHE CANNOT GET THE AGREEMENT SHE WANTS.

4. THE SHEIKH MAINTAINS THAT IF HE DOES NOT OBTAIN AGREEMENT TO RETURN TO THE SITUATION PREVAILING BEFORE HIS OUSTER IN 1953, HE WILL LOSE CREDIBILITY WITH THE KASHMIRIS. THE GOI HAS A SIMILAR PROBLEM WITH AGREEING TO GO BACK TO UOTEN AND THE TWO POSITIONS AS STATED PUBLICLY ALLOW LITTLE ROOM FOR COMPROMISE. WITH BOTH SIDES CONTINUING TO PROFESS PUBLIC OPTIMISM, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF THE RANCOR OF ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO. NEITHER SEEMS TO BE IN A GREAT HURRY OR UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT. TRUE, THE SHEIKH IS 69, BUT HE LMSKED STRONG AND HEALTHY AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE.

5. THE STATE GOVERNMENT MOVES FROM SRINAGAR TO ITS WINTER CAPITAL OF JAMMU IN EARLY NOVEMBER, AND POLITICS SLOW DOWN IN KASHMIR FOR THE WINTER. IT LOOKS AS THOOUGH THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL CARRY OVER AT LEAST UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT RETURNS TO SRINAGAR NEXT SPRING. WITH TWO MASTER POLITICIANS AND NEGOTIATORS AT WORK, WE ARE NEITHER OPTIMISTIC OR PESSEMISTIC ABOUT EVENTUAL AGREEMENT. BOTH SIDES ARE OBVIOUSLY USING "TIME" AND SANG-FROID AS WEAPONS AND THE DUEL MAY LAST FOR QUITE A WHILE.
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